

Introductory text from the Turkestan Al'bom, 1871-72. Translated by Heather S. Sonntag, 2006.

Foreword to the Turkestan Album

Before the Russian advance into the territory which lies along the middle course of the Syr Darya, the scope of knowledge about the regions subject to the khans of Kokan and Bukhara was very limited. Information provided by Arab geographers over the decades and subsequent centuries, although introducing several minute details about the topography of the surveyed country, nevertheless relates to eras remote from ours. Europeans and travelers rarely penetrated this part of Central Asia.

The first travelers this century to penetrate Kokan were Russians. But in 1404, Gonzales-de-Clavijo, the envoy of King Henry III of Castille, traveled to the court of Timur on the route from the rivers Behari to Samarkand, via the borders of the Bukharan khanate from the Amu Darya to Shahrisabz. Later, in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, the Bukharan khanate was visited by Russians, but we collected very little intelligence from the emissaries of Peter the Great. More detailed reports about this khanate were conveyed by Baron A. Meyendorf, formerly at the embassy of Negri, in the beginning of the 1820's. Information concerning the smaller part of the khanate is based on remaining surveys, and others on surveys[?]. They pertain to the northwestern parts of the khanate from the Kizyl Kum to Bukhara. More terrain surveyed and described is quite detailed, including parts of Butenin's forty-year mission. N.V. Khanikov and Leman reported data in their own articles about the eastern and southern parts of the khanate. After Clavijo, this was the first important detailed description of Samarkand and the route to Karshi. The essay of N.V. Khanikov is remarkable for its faithful observation of the subject described by him and for the conscientiousness of work, rare among European experts of the East. Expeditions of General Ignat'ev, however, added to the information available, though they primarily concerned the northwest part of the khanate.

At the beginning of the century, agents, like Burnashev, Pospelov and Nazarov, initially procured ideas about the Khokand khanate traveling from western Siberia to Khokand and Tashkent but their reports were all quite brief and unsubstantial.

The unfavorable conditions which surrounded the aforementioned travelers in Central Asia would be removed when a considerable part of Central Asia was opened up by Russian troops to European civilization.

The occupation of Tashkent and then of Samarkand opened up for Russian researchers of Central Asia a broad field for the multi-faceted study of this region, which had long been the object of their avid curiosity.

In light of satisfying the common interest and rapid familiarization of the reading public about our nation's new ambition on behalf of the Turkestan, Governor-General, Adjutant General K. P. von Kaufman I compiled the photograph album in order to acquaint the whole world and the enterprising administration with the region. The main aim of these albums is to visually present: 1) the past life of the region in preserved ancient monuments (archaeological part); 2) contemporary life of the populations – types, beliefs, rites, customs, dwellings, dress and views of more populated places in the region's borderlands; 3) cultures of the country in industrial and technical relations (economic part); and 4) advancement of the Russians into this new land, grouped together as one, views of the country where improvements arrived due to Russian arms, and portraits of the agents who were the first to open routes in Central Asia (historical part).

Owing to the extensiveness of this undertaking, work on the album lasted more than two years. The compilation of photography was entrusted to A. L. Kuhn; the survey of remarkable architecture related to the antiquities of Samarkand was assigned to N. V. Bogaevsky; and, L. A. Shostak painted watercolors of the detailed tile, which decorated the ancient buildings of Samarkand.

After the four parts of the Turkestan Album the following are included:

“Materials for the archaeological record of the ancient monuments in the Syr Darya region and the Zaravshan district,” A. L. Kuhn,

“Ethnographic observations,” also Kuhn,

“Central Asians trades,” M. I. Brodovsky and

“A sketch of Russian advancement into Central Asia,” M. A. Terentyev.

[lower left] Permitted by the Censor, Saint Petersburg, 6 November 1872.

[lower right] Printing-house of K. Zameslovsky, Bolshaya Meshchanskaya, No. 33.